





Industrial Policy Commission General Assembly (Agriculture, Marine & Blue Economy Sectors)

 Friday 16th  **Virtual**
May 2025

 **3PM**



2025 General Assembly Report

Industrial Policy Commission (Agriculture and Marine & Blue Economy)

<p>Date: Friday, May 16, 2025</p> <p>Time: 03:00 pm</p> <p>Duration: 2 hours</p> <p>Venue: Virtual</p>	<p>INDUSTRIAL POLICY COMMISSION GENERAL ASSEMBLY (AGRICULTURE AND MARINE & BLUE ECONOMY)</p> <p>Details of Discussants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ms Lumun Amanda Feese, Co-Facilitator, Industrial Policy Commission• Mr Stephen Daniel, Senior Associate, Think Tank Operations, NESG• Mr Sadiq Usman, Group Director of Strategy and Stakeholder Relations, Flour Mills of Nigeria.• Mr MacDonald Ukah, Thematic Lead, Agriculture• Ms. Kashimana Tumba, Member, Marine and Blue Economy Thematic Group <p>Moderated by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jackson Mbotidem, Anchor, Industrial Policy Commission
<p>Background</p>	<p>The Industrial Policy Commission (IndPC) is one of the public-private dialogue platforms at the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG), dedicated to driving Nigeria's industrialisation through policy advocacy, stakeholder engagement, and strategic implementation. It plays a pivotal role in facilitating the adoption and execution of recommendations from the Nigerian Economic Summit (NES), the NESG's annual flagship event.</p> <p>Bringing together public and private sector stakeholders, civil society, academia, and international organisations, the IndPC recognises industrialisation as a fundamental driver of economic growth, job creation, and national competitiveness.</p> <p>The IndPC seeks to accelerate Nigeria's industrialisation in line with the African Agenda 2063. It aims to position Nigeria as Africa's leading industrial powerhouse and a model for sustainable economic transformation by applying the African Union's Accelerated Industrial Development for Africa (AIDA) framework. Addressing these systemic challenges requires a comprehensive approach that encompasses manufacturing, infrastructure, natural resource development, trade, and innovation.</p> <p>To achieve its mandate, the Industrial Policy Commission operates through the following thematic groups: Oil and Gas, Power, Renewable Energy, Marine and Blue Economy, Mining, Manufacturing, and Agriculture.</p>

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Context	<p>In 2024, the NESG Board initiated an independent review of the structure of the NESG Policy Commissions to reposition them for greater effectiveness, increased impact, and enhanced engagement with stakeholders in Nigeria's public policy space, effective from 2025 and beyond. Based on the review, the Board approved reducing the number of Policy Commissions from 12 to 6 and the number of Thematic Working Groups from 46 to 30, to emphasise a narrower focus for more impactful outcomes.</p> <p>The Industrial Policy Commission (IndPC) was established as one of the six (6) Policy Commissions under the new structure, reflecting the importance of industrialisation in Nigeria's economic transformation. The IndPC integrates key thematic areas from the former Manufacturing and Mining Policy Commission and the Energy Policy Commission. This restructuring ensures a more holistic and strategic approach to the development and implementation of industrial policy.</p> <p>Recognising the critical role industry experts and stakeholders play, the Industrial Policy Commission (IndPC) is looking to host a General Assembly (GA) to engage relevant stakeholders on proposed initiatives for the year. Given the broad scope of the Policy Commission, the 2025 GA will be held across three days for the thematic groups. The GA allows current and potential IndPC members to learn about the Commission's activities and discuss key industrial policy issues and strategic focus areas for 2025.</p>
Opening Remarks Mr. Sadiq Usman Group Director of Strategy and Stakeholder Relations, Flour Mills of Nigeria Plc	<p>Mr. Usman welcomed participants warmly, acknowledging the presence of distinguished representatives from various Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), members of the Nigerian Economic Summit Group's (NESG) Industrial Policy Commission, industry stakeholders, development partners, civil society actors, and researchers.</p> <p>He noted that the session marked the third and final General Assembly in the 2025 sectoral engagement series organised by the Industrial Policy Commission. The series began with the Energy Sector Assembly held on April 29th, followed by the Manufacturing and Mining Assembly on May 9th, culminating in this final convening focused on Agriculture and the Marine and Blue Economy.</p> <p>In his address, Mr. Usman emphasised the strategic significance of these two sectors to Nigeria's economic transformation. He highlighted agriculture as a cornerstone of Nigeria's economy, contributing approximately 25% to national GDP and employing a substantial share of the labor force. He stressed the need for structural transformation within the sector to enhance productivity and enable it to meet the dual goals of food security and agro-based industrialisation.</p>

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	<p>Similarly, he identified the marine and blue economy as an area with untapped potential for sustainable economic development. He drew attention to the broad scope of opportunities within the sector, including fisheries, coastal tourism, maritime logistics, shipping, and ocean-based renewable energy. In the context of global environmental challenges and the urgency of sustainability, Mr. Usman called for a reimagining of investment and governance strategies within the marine and blue economy space.</p> <p>Mr. Usman reaffirmed the role of the Industrial Policy Commission as a vital multi-stakeholder platform designed to foster evidence-based dialogue, distil actionable policy recommendations, and strengthen collaboration across sectors. He noted that the Commission operates through seven thematic groups, including those focused on agriculture and the marine and blue economy, which collectively seek to harmonise public-private sector priorities and drive inclusive industrial development.</p> <p>In concluding his remarks, Mr. Usman encouraged participants to engage deeply, co-create innovative solutions, and generate practical recommendations that can move Nigeria from being resource-rich to value-rich. He expressed gratitude on behalf of NESG and the Commission’s leadership for the participants’ commitment and anticipated productive and impactful deliberations throughout the session.</p>
<p>Presentation by Think Tank Operations</p> <p>Mr. Stephen Daniel, Think Tank Operations, NESG</p>	<p>Mr. Stephen Daniel delivered a presentation outlining the NESG’s operations, with a focus on the strategic vision, structure, engagement mechanisms, and membership opportunities within the organisation. The session served as both an onboarding briefing for new participants and a call for increased membership engagement.</p> <p>He opened by framing NESG’s work within a well-regarded theoretical model that connects three key policy streams—problems, politics, and policies — highlighting that meaningful policy change occurs when these streams converge, not by coincidence, but through deliberate, sustained advocacy (Kingdon 1984). Mr. Daniel emphasised that participants and stakeholders play a critical role in achieving this convergence, particularly in sectors such as agriculture and the blue economy.</p> <p>Mr. Daniel reiterated NESG’s overarching vision: to become Africa’s leading private-sector-led think tank committed to building a modern, globally competitive, and inclusive Nigerian economy. This mission is grounded in core values, including ethical business practices, objective research, open dialogue, market competitiveness, democratic governance, and national interest.</p>

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Presentation by
Think Tank
Operations

Mr. Stephen
Daniel, Think
Tank Operations,
NESG

He highlighted NESG's four strategic roles:

- **Dialogue Partner** – Driving Policy Change through Public-Private Dialogue Platforms and Engagements
- **Accountability Partner** – Leveraging Research Scorecards and Policy Products to Build National Consensus on Policy Performance and Key Issues
- **Connector** – Driving Policy Change through Networks and Influence
- **Intervener** – Driving Policy Change through Interventions, Monitoring, Influential Evaluation and Reporting.

The NESG is guided by Public-Private Dialogue (PPD) principles, which guide the activities of the various PPD platforms at the NESG.

The NESG PPD platforms comprise policy commissions and their thematic working groups, roundtables, business councils, special task forces, communities of practice, and expert forums, all designed to advance meaningful policy agendas.

He noted the restructuring of policy commissions in 2024, which streamlined the Policy Commissions from twelve (12) into six (6), alongside other new PPD platforms:

- Education
- Health
- Industrial
- Infrastructure & Allied Services
- Tourism, Hospitality, Entertainment, Creatives, Cultural & Sports Industries
- Trade, Investment & Competitiveness

In addition to the Policy Commissions, the NESG also manages:

- CEO Business Councils (e.g., Food Security, Digital Economy)
- Taskforces (e.g., Special Taskforce on Climate Action and Implementation)
- Expert Forums (e.g., Financial Architecture)
- Roundtables and Communities of Practice (e.g., Youth, MSMEs)

The PPD Platforms review government policies, advocate for necessary changes, and engage in activities across three key phases: pre-summit, summit, and post-summit.

Mr. Stephen concluded by highlighting the value proposition for volunteers, which includes: Opportunities to influence national policy; Access to internal research and publications; Invitations to relevant policy events and advocacy programs.

He invited all interested stakeholders to register on the NESG volunteer platform to contribute to national reform efforts. He emphasised the importance of every participant's voice in driving evidence-based policy change across Nigeria's industrial sectors.

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NESG Industrial Sector Reform Agenda & Pathway

Ms Lumun
Amanda Feese
Co- Facilitator,
Industrial Policy
Commission,
NESG

Ms. Amanda delivered an in-depth overview of the Industrial Policy Commission (IndPC), one of the newest and most expansive commissions within the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG). Her presentation provided important context on the commission's creation, structure, and dual advocacy strategy, while also issuing a call to action for volunteer engagement.

She began by welcoming attendees to the joint General Assembly of the Agriculture and Marine & Blue Economy Thematic Groups, explaining that the Industrial Policy Commission was established as part of a comprehensive restructuring of NESG's policy commissions. This restructuring resulted in the merger of the Manufacturing and Mining Policy Commission, the Energy Policy Commission, and the former Marine and Blue Economy Thematic Group into a single Policy Commission, the Industrial Policy Commission. The rationale for this consolidation was to reflect and drive NESG's long-standing commitment to Nigeria's industrialisation more effectively.

Industrialisation, she emphasised, is not limited to manufacturing alone, but is a multidimensional process involving infrastructure (roads, rails, ports, housing, and digital systems), innovation and research, natural resource extraction, and value addition.

She noted that the IndPC would work collaboratively with other commissions, particularly:

- Infrastructure (and Allied Services) Policy Commission
- Education Policy Commission (to leverage research and innovation)
- Trade, Investment, and Competitiveness Policy Commission
- Health Policy Commission
- Special Taskforce on Climate Action and Implementation

This integrated approach aims to build synergy across sectors in support of an industrial policy that is coherent, responsive, and results-oriented.

Since January 2025, thematic group leaders within the IndPC have been conducting sectoral assessments and developing advocacy strategies tailored to their respective sectors. These include agriculture, marine and blue economy, energy, mining, and others.

Ms Amanda explained that the IndPC's strategy operates on two levels:

1. Sectoral Reform Advocacy – Each thematic group identifies the key reforms necessary to unlock growth, productivity, and competitiveness within its respective sector.

2. Cross-Sectoral Industrial Policy Advocacy – These sectoral agendas will be harmonised under a unified national industrial policy framework.

This two-pronged strategy aims to ensure that reforms are targeted and practical, while contributing to the broader goal of sustainable industrialisation.

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	<p>Ms Amanda critically assessed Nigeria's historical industrial policy approaches, noting that most efforts have disproportionately focused on manufacturing consumer goods, particularly through import substitution, export-oriented incentives, and investment promotion. While these approaches have driven some growth, they have not sufficiently advanced the production of capital goods, machinery and industrial inputs essential for actual industrial depth. She pointed out that this has left Nigeria overly reliant on external supply chains.</p> <p>However, she provided a hopeful outlook, citing progress in the oil and gas sector, where the Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry Content Development Act has spurred local manufacturing of capital equipment. She argued that this success demonstrates the possibility of expanding capital goods manufacturing across other sectors, such as iron and steel, agro-processing, forestry, and the marine and blue economy.</p> <p>In conclusion, Ms Amanda encouraged participants to join the commission's thematic groups as active volunteers, noting that everyone involved, including herself, is a volunteer contributing their time, skills, and even personal resources. She stressed the importance of moving beyond passive criticism to active civic participation, highlighting that while the journey toward reform is often long and challenging, it is also gratifying.</p>
<p>Presentation of the Agriculture Thematic Group Work Plan</p> <p>Mr MacDonald Ukah Thematic Lead, Agriculture</p>	<p>Mr. Macdonald Ukah, the Thematic Lead, Agriculture, delivered an in-depth presentation on the state of Nigeria's agricultural sector, offering a critical diagnosis of its challenges and proposing strategic pathways for its transformation.</p> <p>He began by drawing attention to the sustained underperformance of the agrarian sector, noting with concern that it had experienced over two years of consecutive contraction in real GDP growth. This prolonged decline, he stressed, is not a statistical anomaly but a reflection of more profound structural weaknesses that have impeded agricultural productivity, rural development, and food security in Nigeria. Despite the country's immense natural endowments and large agrarian population, agriculture has not delivered commensurate socio-economic outcomes, and this failure now poses a serious threat to both national stability and inclusive growth.</p> <p>One of the key themes of his presentation was the widening gap between population growth and food production. Mr. Macdonald Ukah warned that Nigeria is fast approaching a food security emergency, with domestic food supply falling far behind the needs of a rapidly growing population. This imbalance is not merely a result of climatic factors or global supply chain disruptions but stems from chronic productivity deficits within the sector itself.</p>

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At the core of these deficits are persistently low yields across staple and cash crops attributed to several interrelated factors: climate change-induced variability, soil degradation, farmer displacement due to insecurity, weak rural infrastructure, and the near-collapse of Nigeria's agricultural research and extension systems.

Previous agricultural strategies have been overly focused on expanding land cultivation and large-scale production schemes, often at the expense of smallholder farmers, who constitute the backbone of Nigeria's food systems. There is a need for a paradigm shift from expansionist models to productivity-led growth, accompanied by a comprehensive intensification strategy that focuses on enhancing yields per hectare through the application of science, technology, and data-driven decision-making. Central to this approach is the need to radically improve farmers' access to high-quality agricultural inputs such as improved seeds, fertilisers, irrigation, and mechanisation.

Another central area of concern is the scale of post-harvest losses in the country. Nigeria loses up to 40% of its food production annually due to poor storage, transport, and processing capacity. These losses not only undermine food availability but also rob farmers of income and reduce overall value retention within the agricultural value chain.

The development of strategically located agro-logistics hubs and cold-chain infrastructure, alongside policies that incentivise private sector investment in rural roads, storage facilities, and food processing zones, should be encouraged. There exists a need for stronger farmer-market linkages through contract farming, digital platforms, and cooperative models to ensure that smallholders can access reliable markets and better prices for their produce.

Institutions play a critical role; as such, the initiative of the Presidential Food Systems Coordinating Unit (PFSCU) is a welcome development. He described it as a potentially transformative platform for ensuring inter-ministerial coordination, policy coherence, and alignment of agricultural programs across federal and subnational levels.

However, he cautioned that for the PFSCU to succeed, it must be empowered with clear mandates, adequate funding, and a results-oriented framework that is insulated from political interference. He encouraged the unit to adopt a multi-stakeholder approach that includes private sector actors, farmers' organisations, and development partners in its planning and implementation processes.

In his concluding remarks, Mr. Macdonald reiterated the need to reposition agriculture as a business, one that is technology-enabled, climate-resilient, and capable of driving industrialisation.

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He emphasised that agriculture should no longer be viewed merely as a developmental tool, but as a core economic sector with the potential to generate jobs, attract investment, and increase export earnings. To achieve this, a systems-oriented approach that integrates agricultural finance, land tenure reform, youth engagement, climate-smart practices, and value addition is needed. He urged stakeholders to move beyond piecemeal interventions and instead embrace bold, evidence-based policies that can unlock Nigeria's agricultural potential for the benefit of all citizens.

Presentation of 2025 Marine and Blue Economy Thematic Group's Work Plan

Ms. Kashimana Tumba Marine & Blue Economy

Ms. Kashimana began by acknowledging the organisers and participants, expressing gratitude for the opportunity to share her perspectives on the marine and blue economy sector.

She started her presentation by establishing a conceptual foundation, explaining that the marine and blue economy refers to the sustainable use of the ocean, sea, and coastal resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and job creation, while preserving the health of marine and coastal ecosystems. It integrates a wide range of financial activities, including fisheries, aquaculture, maritime transport, coastal tourism, renewable energy, marine biotechnology, and underwater mining, into a broader framework for sustainable development.

Nigeria, as a country endowed with extensive coastal and maritime assets, including a coastline stretching over 850 kilometres and vast inland waterways, has not fully explored or maximised the potential of the blue economy. For decades, national development plans and public discourse have prioritised land-based economic activities, often referred to as the "green economy." At the same time, the marine and aquatic space has been neglected or treated solely through the lens of ports, shipping, and oil exports. However, the blue economy presents a transformative opportunity for Nigeria, particularly in diversifying its economy beyond oil and gas, enhancing food security, generating foreign exchange, and creating inclusive employment opportunities.

She challenged the limited perception among policymakers and the public that the marine economy is only about seaports and harbours. While acknowledging the critical role of maritime logistics and international trade, the blue economy is much broader and includes both conventional and emerging sectors. These include offshore renewable energy such as wind and tidal power, marine biotechnology used in pharmaceuticals and cosmetics, eco-tourism, seaweed farming, ocean data services, marine environmental protection, and even underwater cultural heritage tourism. As such, Nigeria must think beyond the obvious and tap into this diversity of economic possibilities, many of which require moderate capital investment but promise high returns on development.

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Presentation of 2025 Marine and Blue Economy Thematic Group's Work Plan

**Ms. Kashimana
Tsumba
Marine & Blue
Economy**

A significant focus of her presentation was the role of the blue economy in addressing Nigeria's youth unemployment crisis. The country's educational and economic systems have failed to absorb millions of young people into meaningful and sustainable livelihoods. Drawing attention to the original vision of the 6-3-3-4 educational structure designed to equip students with vocational and technical skills at various stages, she noted that poor implementation has led to a disconnect between education and employment. However, the blue economy could fill this gap by offering practical and diverse employment opportunities.

In other countries, young people are trained in maritime academies and technical institutes to take up roles in fishing, marine engineering, navigation, shipbuilding, and coastal tourism without necessarily having to pass through a university. Nigerian policymakers could replicate such models by investing in technical education and maritime training centers in coastal and riverine communities.

There are several blue economy sub-sectors that remain untapped or underutilised in Nigeria. These include coral and pearl farming, seaweed cultivation for food and cosmetics, marine-based arts and crafts, and even boat-building industries that can serve both local and export markets. There also exist creative and cultural dimensions of the blue economy, such as marine-themed fashion, literature, festivals, and storytelling that also deserve attention, especially in a country with such a rich aquatic cultural heritage. There is a need for greater investments in the "softer" aspects of development that are often overlooked, such as community-based marine tourism, local fisheries processing, and environmentally friendly marine hospitality services.

On the institutional and policy front, there are concerns about the absence of a coherent national framework or dedicated oversight body for the blue economy. While Nigeria recently established a Ministry of Marine and Blue Economy, its mandate and coordination mechanisms are still unclear, and inter-agency collaboration remains weak.

The blue economy, by its very nature, cuts across multiple sectors, such as, agriculture, energy, transport, environment, tourism, science and technology and thus requires a whole-of-government approach. There is an urgent need for a clearly articulated national strategy on the blue economy that defines roles, sets targets, and ensures alignment across federal, state, and local authorities.

Ensuring inclusivity and environmental sustainability in the development of the blue economy is important. Marine ecosystems are highly sensitive and vulnerable to pollution, overfishing, oil spills, and unregulated industrial activity. Therefore, any attempt to develop the blue economy must be grounded in sustainability principles, including environmental protection, climate resilience, and responsible resource use.

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She called for the integration of coastal and marine ecosystem management into national climate adaptation strategies and emphasised the importance of science, data, and traditional knowledge in shaping policy.

In concluding her presentation, she made a passionate appeal to government actors, civil society, donors, and the private sector to treat the blue economy not as a peripheral agenda but as a central pillar of Nigeria's development strategy. She called for deliberate reforms to mobilise investment, empower youth and women, strengthen institutional capacity, and build public awareness. She argued that by rethinking its relationship with the sea not just as a boundary or a trade route, but as a source of life, opportunity, and innovation, Nigeria can unlock new pathways for inclusive growth, national cohesion, and long-term resilience.



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Key Questions and Answers

Question 1: What would you say are the major drivers of the deficit in wheat production in Nigeria? Why is local production so low?

Answer: The primary reason for the persistent wheat production deficit in Nigeria is the fundamental climatic mismatch between the crop and the environment. Wheat is a temperate crop, and Nigeria's tropical climate presents severe limitations to its cultivation. As a result, wheat farming has historically been unappealing to smallholder farmers who dominate the country's agricultural landscape. These farmers have not had a compelling reason to grow wheat due to its poor yield potential under local conditions and the existence of more viable crop alternatives. Additionally, the country has not, until recently, invested significantly in developing seed varieties that can perform well in Nigeria's ecological zones. The outcome of these factors is a national wheat output that is currently below 100,000 metric tons annually, while national demand stands at roughly 6 million metric tons; the shortfall is met through large-scale imports.

Question 2: Are there any government programs or interventions addressing this low level of wheat production?

Answer: Yes, there are ongoing efforts to address the situation. A notable initiative is being led by the Flour Milling Association of Nigeria (FMAN), comprising major industry stakeholders such as Flour Mills of Nigeria and Olam. This association is implementing a Wheat Development Program that is designed to encourage and support domestic wheat production. The program involves the deployment of financial and technical resources to help farmers adopt wheat cultivation. It includes partnerships with research institutions, such as the Lake Chad Research Institute, to develop seed varieties that are better suited to Nigeria's climate. These efforts are also accompanied by training programs designed to help farmers adopt improved agronomic practices. The goal is to demonstrate that wheat cultivation can be viable and to scale up production over time gradually. However, this is a long-term initiative that requires patience, sustained investment, and policy support.

Question 3: Given that corporations have greater resources, how is the private sector helping smallholder farmers scale wheat production?

Answer: The private sector, particularly through FMAN and its member organisations, plays a crucial role in supporting smallholder farmers to scale wheat production. These companies are not only investing in seed

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development and research, but are also working directly with farmers to improve cultivation practices. They provide access to inputs, training, and, importantly, guaranteed markets through structured offtake arrangements. This approach helps to reduce the risks that farmers face when trying a new or historically unprofitable crop. By offering technical assistance and financial incentives, these corporations are attempting to shift the perception of wheat as an unviable crop in Nigeria. Nevertheless, the challenges are significant, and transforming the wheat value chain remains a long-term goal that requires overcoming deep-rooted climatic and economic barriers.

Question 4: Can Nigeria realistically become self-sufficient or a net exporter of wheat in the future?

Answer: While it is theoretically possible for Nigeria to increase local wheat production substantially, becoming fully self-sufficient or a net exporter of wheat is not realistic in the short to medium term. The ecological constraints of Nigeria's climate make it challenging to cultivate wheat on a scale and with the same efficiency as in temperate regions. Achieving any meaningful reduction in the wheat import bill would require years of sustained efforts in research, yield improvement, farmer education, and infrastructure development. Rather than aiming for complete self-sufficiency in wheat, experts suggest that Nigeria would benefit more from focusing on crops where it holds a natural competitive advantage, such as maize or cassava. By strengthening these value chains and expanding export-oriented production, the country could generate the foreign exchange needed to import wheat and other products that are not ecologically optimal to grow locally. This would be a more strategic and economically rational approach to addressing the wheat deficit while enhancing overall food system sustainability.

Question 5: Do you think the advocacy issues raised in the marine and blue economy space are important enough to pursue? If not, what else should we focus on?

Answer: Yes, the advocacy issues identified in the marine and blue economy are considered crucial. However, speakers emphasised the need to shift from constant discussion to actual implementation. There is a strong call for moving beyond paperwork and policy drafts into real field-level action. This means not just identifying problems but actively setting timelines, designing actionable strategies, and pursuing measurable outcomes. It was suggested that a strategic boot camp be organised, where stakeholders can determine clear priorities, decide on a phased sequence of actions, and define practical steps that can translate plans into tangible results.

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Question 6: Is the underutilisation of marine resources in Nigeria due to financial incapacity or lack of government priority?

The primary reason Nigeria's marine resources remain underutilised is not just due to a lack of funding, but more significantly, due to the lack of awareness and prioritisation by stakeholders and the government. He explained that while the oil and gas sector receives quick attention due to its perceived profitability, the marine and blue economy has not been given the same focus because its potential remains underappreciated. Essentially, the marine sector has suffered from being undervalued, despite its significant capacity to generate economic returns.

Question 7: How can we consolidate funds from the public and private sectors to finance the marine and blue economy?

Answer: While government funding is limited, financing for the marine and blue economy can be secured through various alternative channels. He mentioned that public-private partnerships (PPPs), international donor funding, development banks, and even crowdfunding are all viable routes. For example, the CVFF fund has begun disbursement under new guidelines, and government agencies like NIWA are already partnering with countries like France to develop infrastructure. He emphasised the importance of advocacy in attracting private sector investment, noting that when people understand the economic potential of the marine space and have confidence in the return on investment, they are more likely to commit resources.

Question 8: Do you think the advocacy issues raised by the agriculture thematic group are essential? What else should we be focusing on?

Answer: The participants affirmed the relevance of the advocacy issues raised in agriculture but also emphasised the importance of asking foundational or first-principle questions. They questioned whether Nigeria is producing for import substitution or export and highlighted that without clear answers to such fundamental questions, agricultural efforts may be misdirected. They stressed that government policy should clarify the country's agrarian purpose, as this will help determine which crops to prioritise, where to focus investments, and how to build the agricultural value chain effectively. Without clarity, there is a risk of pursuing productivity without direction, which would lead to limited value addition and poor outcomes.

Question 9: Why do we send raw commodities abroad (e.g., cocoa) and get less value than countries like Switzerland, which don't even produce cocoa?

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Answer: It was pointed out that the key problem lies in Nigeria's failure to add value to its agricultural products. Countries like Switzerland, which do not grow cocoa, earn significantly more by processing and packaging it into chocolate, while Nigeria remains stuck at the level of exporting raw cocoa beans. They explained that adding even a single layer of value, such as basic processing or branding, can generate significant employment and income. It was stated that each hectare of land can potentially generate three jobs when value addition is involved. Moreover, they highlighted that such opportunities are particularly beneficial for women, who often lack access to land and finance but can participate meaningfully in the processing and packaging segments of the value chain.

Question 10: Should we be producing wheat locally just because we consume a lot of it and import 95% of it?

Answer: It was acknowledged that while Nigeria imports the majority of its wheat, there is an economic rationale for promoting local production through import substitution; however, the approach must be strategic. It was argued that the government should prioritise crops where the country has a clear comparative advantage, such as cassava, rather than pouring scarce resources into wheat production, which may not be competitive globally. They noted that substitution policies, such as incorporating cassava into flour, are helpful but should not be rigidly imposed on the industry. Instead, they recommended that Nigeria adopt a dual approach—supporting import substitution where viable, but placing more emphasis on value addition and developing products for the export market.

Question 11: What is the NESG's position on GMOs? What are we doing about indigenous seed varieties?

Answer: It was clarified that the NESG has not taken a formal position on genetically modified organisms (GMOs), but it is closely monitoring ongoing developments in Nigeria's seed and agricultural landscape. Nigeria has made some critical legislative strides, including the Seed Council Act and the Plant Variety Protection (PVP) Law, which collectively support the development and commercialisation of improved seed varieties. The NESG and its partners are focusing on increasing access to high-yield, disease-resistant, and indigenous seed varieties, as well as enhancing agricultural extension services to reach a broader range of farmers. Their view is that by getting the basics right with indigenous seeds and input delivery systems, the debate over GMOs might become less relevant or contentious in the future.

Question 12: Is there international resistance to Africa's efforts to add value (e.g., cocoa to chocolate)? What about the AfCFTA's role?

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Answer: There was consensus that African countries, including Nigeria, face certain international policy barriers when attempting to add value to raw commodities. One example given was the European Union's policy on uranium, which limits what African countries can do with their own resources. While external resistance exists, the real challenge lies within Africa itself. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) offers enormous opportunities for regional value chains and trade, but implementation remains weak. Capacity constraints, a lack of political will, and protectionist attitudes among African countries continue to undermine the full realization of the AfCFTA. For the AfCFTA to work, countries must break down internal barriers, improve cross-border logistics, and shift their mindsets from competition to collaboration.

During the General Assembly, several issues were identified as they relate to the different sectors. These Include:

Agriculture- related Issues:

- **Low Agricultural Growth:** Nigeria is experiencing historically low agricultural GDP growth, averaging approximately 1.2% annually since the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Insecurity in Farming Zones:** Violence and insecurity have driven farmers away from key production areas, reducing output and access to farmland.
- **Climate-Related Shocks:** Unpredictable weather events are disrupting farming seasons and increasing vulnerability to food insecurity.
- **Low Productivity and Yields:** Agricultural yields remain significantly below global averages due to inefficient use of inputs and poor farming practices.
- **Food-Farm-Industry Conflict:** Domestic food needs are clashing with industrial processing demand, especially in key staples like maize.
- **Post-Harvest Losses:** High perishability and lack of storage facilities are reducing the amount of usable agricultural output.

On Marine and Blue Economy:

- **Overlapping Roles Among Maritime Agencies:** The functions of key institutions, such as NIMASA, NIWA, and NSC, often conflict, resulting in duplication, inefficiencies, and regulatory bottlenecks.
- **Delayed Reform of Maritime Legislation:** Critical bills such as the Ports and Harbours Bill and the National Transport Commission Bill have stalled, leaving Nigeria with outdated laws that do not reflect current realities.
- **Inadequate Port and Inland Infrastructure:** Poor dredging, inaccessible roads, and inefficient port facilities have reduced operational capacity and discouraged investment in coastal and inland waterways.

Issues Identified

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of Vessel Financing Options – Local operators face high capital requirements and limited access to low-interest financing, which makes it difficult for them to acquire or maintain vessels.• Weak Maritime Education and Job Linkages – Training institutions lack strong industry connections, resulting in graduates who struggle to secure seafaring placements or relevant marine jobs.• Fragmented Institutional Coordination– Agencies and stakeholders often operate in silos without a unified framework, resulting in duplication of efforts and missed opportunities for synergy.
Recommendations	<p>The following recommendations were provided to address the identified challenges:</p> <p>On Agriculture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reform Input Subsidy Delivery: Redesign input subsidy schemes using verified farmer data to ensure that high-quality seeds and fertilisers reach the actual farmers.• Strengthen Agricultural Data Systems: Build a robust national agricultural data repository to inform policy and investment decisions.• Focus on Yield Transformation: Prioritise increasing productivity per hectare rather than expanding farmland as a near-term goal.• Enhance Storage and Reserve Capacity: Invest in post-harvest infrastructure and food reserves to minimise losses and stabilise supply availability.• Balance Food and Industrial Use: Increase production to generate a sufficient surplus for both direct consumption and industrial processing needs.• Leverage Nigeria's Agro-Endowments: Drive agro-led industrialisation by harnessing Nigeria's ecological diversity and crop potential. <p>On Marine and Blue Economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Harmonise Institutional Mandates and Jurisdiction: Clearly define the roles of maritime agencies and streamline their functions under a unified regulatory framework to reduce duplication and improve service delivery.• Accelerate the Passage of Key Maritime Bills: Engage lawmakers and relevant ministries to urgently pass modern laws that support private investment, regulatory reform, and sector expansion.• Invest in Critical Infrastructure Development: Prioritise dredging, road upgrades, port modernisation, and inland waterway facilities to improve connectivity and lower logistics costs.• Establish Dedicated Vessel Financing Schemes: Create single-digit interest loan facilities with flexible terms to enable local investors and SMEs to acquire vessels and grow operations.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengthen Academic-Industry Linkages in Marine Education: Foster collaboration between training institutions and industry players to ensure curriculum relevance and facilitate internships and job placement.• Establish a Blue Economy Coordination Mechanism: Set up a multi-stakeholder platform or task force to guide the implementation of blue economy initiatives and ensure coherence across relevant agencies.
Next Steps	<p>On Agriculture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pilot Targeted Input Reform: Roll out a data-driven, location-specific input distribution program in priority food belts.• Support Ongoing Data Initiatives: Back the NESG's engagement with the Presidential Food Systems Coordinating Unit to consolidate data systems.• Accelerate Mechanisation Efforts: Begin phased investments in land reform and mechanisation to support long-term hectare expansion.• Scale Up Extension Services: Link reformed subsidy delivery with practical extension support to improve farm-level efficiency.• Promote Value Chain Development: Identify priority value chains for investment and policy support based on productivity and industrial potential.• Coordinate Food Security Planning: Work with relevant ministries and stakeholders to develop a national food balance framework and reserves plan. <p>On Marine and Blue Economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Set Up a National Blue Economy Coordination Task Force: Formally establish an inter-ministerial group to drive alignment, prioritise investments, and monitor progress across sectors.• Engage the National Assembly on Priority Bills: Facilitate sustained advocacy with lawmakers and relevant committees to ensure the speedy passage of pending maritime legislation.• Mobilise Resources for Key Flagship Projects: Secure funding for initiatives such as the C-Link inland waterway connectivity project, vessel acquisition, and port infrastructure upgrades.• Partner with Universities and Training Institutes: Support curriculum reviews, certification programs, and partnerships that prepare students for jobs in the marine and blue economy sectors.• Design Inclusive Financing Models with the Ministry of Finance: Develop tailored funding instruments that lower the barrier for local participation, especially for women, youth, and SMEs.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Launch a National Blue Economy Awareness Campaign: Utilise media, stakeholder events, and advocacy to raise awareness about the sector's potential and secure buy-in from both the private and public sectors.
Comments	<p>During the general assembly, a participant emphasised the importance of building a private sector-led institution, in collaboration with the government, to manage a modern and dynamic data infrastructure for the agricultural sector. Drawing a parallel to how the Nigerian Industrial Development Bank (NIDB) transformed the financial industry, he emphasised that relying solely on government systems poses a risk of creating static platforms that fail to meet evolving stakeholder needs.</p> <p>Another participant supported this view and added the necessity of collaborating with the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) to address challenges in the shipping sector. He emphasised the need for grants, scholarships, and a robust succession plan. One participant appreciated the discussion, noting that conversations spanning agriculture to marine issues are crucial economic dialogues. Others also expressed their appreciation of the presentation.</p> <p>A participant pointed out that agencies such as the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA), the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA), and the Shippers Council implement regulations primarily to fulfil revenue mandates. According to him, unless these revenue-driven motives are reformed, these agencies will have little incentive to change their current practices under the blue economy.</p> <p>Two participants highlighted Nigeria's strong international presence and capabilities, noting the untapped potential. One posed a critical question about Nigeria's agricultural orientation—whether the focus is import substitution, export, or a mix of both. He noted that this decision must be made in consultation with federal, state, and local governments. He also emphasised the importance of clear land-use policies, as most states lack well-defined strategies for allocating land among different forms of agriculture. This, he explained, has led to rising conflicts among farmers over diminishing natural resources.</p> <p>Another participant referred to materials shared by MacDonald and echoed the need for transitioning from a “debt to farm” mindset. A participant noted that Nigeria needs to focus on developing its internal capacity to export its homegrown products to the global market.</p> <p>Another emphasised foundational efforts, such as identifying priority products and strengthening farm groups. He stressed the importance of</p>

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working closely with rural farmers to enhance their capacity and ensure consistency and quality in production. He referred to rural communities as a “goldmine” and advocated for rural-based value creation.

Ms. Amanda brought attention to the government’s move to operationalise the Cabotage Vessel Financing Fund (CVFF), requesting insights from Ms Kash. Responding, Ms. Kash explained that the CVFF is financed through mandatory payments by operators in the cabotage industry into an account managed by NIMASA. The fund, now approved for disbursement, offers single-digit interest loans with an eight-year term, designed to support vessel financing. Lending institutions, including commercial banks, have been engaged to manage this disbursement. She added that the blue economy policy and sectoral strategy have recently been approved by the Federal Executive Council, with more updates expected in the coming months.

Another participant highlighted the importance of leveraging cottage industries, citing the success of Indonesia and Malaysia in utilising small-scale processing to boost their palm oil industries. He emphasised the importance of instilling a processing and packaging mindset among rural farmers and of adding value at the farm gate level. Another echoed this by highlighting the necessity of partnering with state governments to ensure the success of these initiatives, which could also drive employment creation.

Finally, a particularly striking point was raised about the optimisation of Nigeria’s land tenure system. The issue, though broader than agriculture, was described as critical to resolving growing tensions and violence tied to land conflicts. A policy mechanism referred to as the “Partnership for Securing Agricultural Lands and Investments,” introduced under the National Agricultural and Innovation Policy of 2022, was mentioned as a potential pathway. The challenge remains how to act in the short term to optimise land use under the current, politically sensitive land tenure system. This remains one of the most pressing unresolved issues raised during the discussion.

Closing Remarks

**Ms Lumun
Amanda Feese
Co-facilitator,
Industrial Policy
Commission**

Ms. Amanda gave the closing remarks, marking the end of the Industrial Policy Commission’s final General Assembly for 2025. She expressed appreciation for the participants’ insights, especially on agriculture and the marine and blue economy, and noted that their feedback would help refine the Commission’s advocacy strategies. Although the Assembly was delayed due to restructuring, she explained that this allowed the team to understand better sectoral challenges and their connection to Nigeria’s broader industrialisation goals.

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She thanked the participant who highlighted the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board, describing it as a model institution for building local industrial capabilities. She emphasised the need to go beyond consumer goods manufacturing, but also invest in local industrial capabilities. She emphasised the need to go beyond consumer goods manufacturing and invest in local production of machinery, technology, and services. Using Norway as a benchmark, she encouraged participants to consider how Nigeria could replicate such success by developing capabilities in oil and gas and extending them to sectors such as shipbuilding, steel, agriculture, and forestry.

Ms Amanda encouraged participants to join the IndPC's working groups, stressing that the work ahead—research, policy engagement, advocacy, and stakeholder coordination—requires more hands. She closed by thanking everyone for their time and support, urging them to stay engaged, provide feedback, and work together to advance Nigeria's industrial transformation.

ABOUT THE NESG

The NESG is an independent, non-partisan, non-sectarian organisation, committed to fostering open and continuous dialogue on Nigeria's economic development. The NESG strives to forge a mutual understanding between leaders of thought so as to explore, discover and support initiatives directed at improving Nigeria's economic policies, institutions, and management.

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